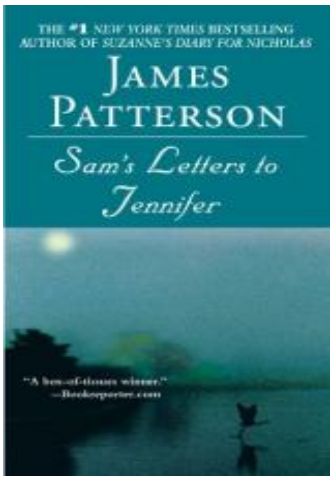
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

Sam's Letters to Jennifer

by James Patterson



About the Book

Dear Reader,

Have you ever gotten a letter that changed your life completely? It happened to me once. I still can feel the urgency that overtook me as I opened the envelope and the hunger I felt for whatever that letter would say. It seemed as if my entire life hung in the balance as I read.

Sam's Letters to Jennifer is a novel about that kind of drama. In it, a woman is summoned back to the town where she grew up. And in the house where she spent her most magical years she finds a series of letters addressed to her. Each of those letters is a piece of a story that will upend completely the world she thought she knew - and throw her into a love more powerful than she ever imagined could be possible. Two extraordinary love stories are entwined here, full of hope and pain and emotions that never die down.

I hope you'll enjoy this novel as much as I've enjoyed writing it. It's not often that you get a letter that changes your life. But it should happen to everyone at least once.

Yours,
James Patterson

Discussion Guide

1. Jennifer's bond with her grandmother is as strong as ever. But in the letters, Sam makes a shocking revelation. How does the news affect Jennifer? Do the letters change aspects of their relationship?

2. There are many acts of personal courage in this novel. Jennifer getting past her loss of Danny and their 'Peanut.' Sam

raising her family and sticking by her husband despite her love for Doc. Brendan fighting his fears of a painful and unsuccessful cancer treatment for the sake of Jennifer's love.

Can you think of any other acts of heroism that took place in the novel? How courageous was it for Jennifer to let go of her job? Which of these stands out most to you?

3. Jennifer is surprised to find a sheaf of letters addressed to her. Her grandmother promises to tell her the secrets she's never told anyone. Why do you think Sam is revealing those secrets now? And why does she choose to tell her story in letters?

4. A major theme of **Sam's Letters to Jennifer** is the importance of telling stories, especially to our families and loved ones. In Chapter 27, Jennifer reflects about writing her column and observes, "How man of us know the true stories of our parents and grandparents? How many of us share the stories of our lives with our children? What a loss to the children if we don't. What are we but our stories?"

But what would have happened if Sam had told her story sooner? Maybe while she was still with Grandpa Charles and raising her children? And what if Brendan had told Jennifer the story of his condition sooner? Do you think there's also a lesson that secrets have their place, too?

5. In one of her first letters, Sam describes to Jennifer two kinds of love: "The hot, crazy kind that turns your chest into a bell and your heart into a clapper. But also the more enduring kind that comes from knowing someone else deeply and letting yourself be known."

Thinking of the couples in the book . . . Sam and Doc, Sam and Grandpa Charles, Jennifer and Danny, Jennifer and Brendan . . . which were dominated by which kinds of love? Are they mutually exclusive or can they exist at the same time with the same person?

6. In one of her first letters, Sam describes to Jennifer two kinds of love: "The hot, crazy kind that turns your chest into a bell and your heart into a clapper. But also the more enduring kind that comes from knowing someone else deeply and letting yourself be known." Thinking of the couples in the book . . . Sam and Doc, Sam and Grandpa Charles, Jennifer and Danny, Jennifer and Brendan . . . which were dominated by which kinds of love? Are they mutually exclusive or can they exist at the same time with the same person?

7. Just when she least expects it, Jennifer gets a chance to experience a new love. How does this change her attitude on love and life?

8. Sam describes coming across a note in the library one day. It read, "For a long time it had seemed to me that life was about to begin --- real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be got through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life."

What events in the novel do Sam and Jennifer for a time treat as obstacles and realize are a part of life by the end?

9. With the discovery of Sam's letters and the unexpected possibility for love, Jennifer has some new thrilling

experiences. In the end, what does Jennifer learn about love? What lessons can she pass on to others?

10. Many of the lessons about love and life imparted in **Sam's Letters to Jennifer** clearly come from Sam and her letters and are directed to her granddaughter, Jennifer. Are there any examples of Jennifer returning her own wisdom and experience to Sam?

Author Bio

James Patterson is the most popular storyteller of our time. He is the creator of unforgettable characters and series, including Alex Cross, the *Women?s Murder Club*, Jane Effing Smith and *Maximum Ride*, and of breathtaking true stories about the Kennedys, John Lennon and Princess Diana, as well as our military heroes, police officers and ER nurses. He has coauthored #1 bestselling novels with Bill Clinton and Dolly Parton, told the story of his own life in JAMES PATTERSON BY JAMES PATTERSON, and received an Edgar Award, 10 Emmy Awards, the Literarian Award from the National Book Foundation, and the National Humanities Medal.

Critical Praise

"An affecting love story awash in tragedy and hope...Patterson again shows us how it is done."

Sam's Letters to Jennifer
by James Patterson

Publication Date: March 1, 2006
Genres: Fiction
Paperback: 272 pages
Publisher: Grand Central Publishing
ISBN-10: 0446613347
ISBN-13: 9780446613347